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Mr Javier Perez de Cuellar
Secretary-General
United Nations
United Nations Plaza
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By Telefax (2 pages)

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17 July 1991

Dear Mr Secretary-General,

East Timor

At its recent meeting held in Geneva from 26-28 June 1991, the Executive Board of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions expressed deep concern about the situation in East Timor, which remains an international unsolved problem.

The occupation of East Timor has repeatedly been condemned not only by United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions upholding the right of the Timorese to self-determination, but also by many other international organizations.

The repressive climate in the territory has indeed continued to lead to serious and repeated human rights violations and so far made it impossible for the working population to organize itself in trade unions and voice its concerns and demands.

By the Indonesian Government's own admission, military operations and related famine had caused the deaths of 120,000 people by the late seventies. The toll is now estimated at nearly 200,000.

Reports of extra-judicial killings by both the security forces and the armed opposition movement persist and we understand that hundreds of cases of "disappearances" remain unresolved. Our organization is also highly concerned about the continuing ill-treatment, detention and torture of many political opponents to the regime.

The ICFTU Executive Board at its recent meeting in Geneva, felt that East Timor should return to the United Nations agenda. In our view, an appropriate way of tackling the problem would be to send a UN team to East Timor to investigate allegations of continuing human rights infringements and subsequently holding a referendum under UN supervision enabling the Timorese to decide their own future.

We call on the United Nations to renew its efforts for a peaceful solution of the conflict through reiterating its support for the right of self-determination of the people of East Timor and for a referendum under international supervision.

In our view, the United Nations is still the only body which can make a major contribution to the political solution of the East Timor problem. We thank you for your continuing efforts in this regard and remain

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary